THE MEASURE
A JOURNAL OF POETRY

Poems by Thomas Dawson, Jessica Nelson North, Royall Snow, Frank Ernest Hill, and others

What Then? And Then What?

Adelaide Crapsey Reviewed—Winifred Welles

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Herbs

I GIVE myself to you. My life I break
Now to anoint your feet.
Like costly spikenard, broken for your sake
My years are sweet,—

My aromatic years. And if their scent
Trouble your wisdom, being hard to trace,
Never inquire what herbs for them were blent
In other days.

Nor tremble if barbaric odors blow
Across the quiet savor of our lot.
Only the compound can concern us now,
The rest is not, is not!

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A Promise

TIME will have its way,—
Time, patiently moving,—
Water in quiet weather
Grinding together
The hard stones of our loving.

Sharp stones that now we tread
With pierced, ecstatic feet,
Will all be round and sweet.

Some day
Our lives that cried and bled,
Will lie down together
Like waves in quiet weather,
In a smooth, cool bed.

—*Jessica Nelson North*

The Servant of the Prophet

I NEVER read the story but I wonder
About that young man in the Book of Kings,
The servant of the prophet, who is nameless.
—You know the story: how the host of Syria
Compassed the city in the dead of night,
And how the young man cried,—"Alas, my master,
How shall we do?"—"Open his eyes, Lord!" cried
The man of God.

"And lo, the side of the mountain
Was full of horses and chariots of fire
About Elisha."

—What had dropped away?
Did other things look different as the hill?
And did he, I have wondered, ever after,
Look with a beating heart on a bare field,
Remembering what an empty ridge had held?

I ought to know: for I myself have seen
The flaming chariots blazing through the pine
And scrub oak; not in chariot form, perhaps,
Because it wasn't chariots that I needed
To save me at the time; but I have seen
For an instant, reinforcement, just at hand!
And then the scrub oak shutting in again,
And the hot sunshine beating on the pine.

Yes, ten to one, the young man did forget,
Or like as not explained it all away;
Yet sometimes, in broad daylight,—*"What was that!"*

Says Life of Youth

I MUST take this beautiful thing and break it;
It is time I began:
I shall make a better thing of it,
But nothing so beautiful!

—Nothing so beautiful as Youth
Starting at the sting of a lash,
Cheeks bright, chin high, back taut, and eyes ablaze,
Outraged, betrayed, incredulous of pain,
Of whips, of thorn-rods, in a world of gold,
Reaching superbly for the whip to break it!

I must take this beautiful thing and break it,
It is time I began;
I shall make a better thing of it,
But nothing so beautiful.

Nothing so beautiful, alas,
As Youth tasting the whip;
Nothing so beautiful, alas, alas,
As Youth first bitten by thorn!

—Abbie Huston Evans

Lost

DEFIANT fruit I plucked
From lyrical green mansions;
Where is your color of pride,
Where is your fiery flavor?

Why do I hear no longer
The eagle voice in darkness
Lifted up like fire
Against the frigid sky?

Have they made you afraid at last,
Who laughed at cold silver?
Or have you seen death's black-bird
Stencilled upon the sun?

It is ice and death for me,
This old bewildered weeping,
I am afraid of the stars,
Lost with your lost voice.

O Turn Your Eyes

SHE who was proud is proud no more
Oh turn your eyes away from her . . .
Until her pride-accustomed face
Shall wear humility with grace.

Lo . . a brave house is overthrown
That lifted straightly up alone . .
Nay: t'was a temple . . worshippers
Woman had never more than hers.

As if some subtle lightning shook,
Power was brightly in her look . . .
As veil before an altar . . . scorn
Upon her lineaments was worn . .

She who did not know pity . . . lies
With misery . . O turn your eyes
And pray that God may soon again
Vouchsafe like beauty unto men.

Impasse

I DREAMED my arms upon you . .
My lips upon your lips . .
Flower I might have plucked . .
Flower I did not pluck.

Like a white king in glory . .
I strode upon the mountains.
Hate me not . . . O flower . . .
I would have kept the dream . . .

My heart was as a lion . . .
Furious . . . and eager . . .
But hands fell to my side:
I could not pierce that veil.

O it was your beauty . . .
Your beauty . . . dawn-flower . . .
After I had been God
That made me but a priest.

Your beauty . . beauty . . beauty
Lake-beauty . . . valley-beauty . . .
With lost cloud harvest . . .
Hate me . . O hate me not . .

—Thomas Dawson

A Ship in a Pier

A SHIP is a slight thing
To moor alongside a city.

Masts are frail
Against steel and stone.

Chanteys are silent
When streets are talking.

Sails are furled
Where the towers rise tall.

A city is white like lightning
And straight like pride—
And a ship is a grey whisper
Tired at its feet . . .

If the ship were mine
And the masts black—

If the ship were mine
And the sails bronze—

I would make a chantey
Heavy with gold;

I could forget to know
That a city ever stood!

—*Alexander Javis*

After a Lost Friend's Calumny

SHOULD the other friends, who have not known
What a friend's scorn can be,
All suddenly lift a brow,
Laugh, and take leave of me—
There would be no breaking now—
This mind would still burn on
Like an understanding stone.

It is no pleasure to confess
To that hard, ultimate thing,
But when the wild geese fly
Together, wing by wing—
Yet honking each alone
His cold, wandering cry—
I shall know their bitterness.

The Withered Ones

THIS hard white body of her—where all quiet mothers
Have laid in sanctuary toward a perfect thing
The brooding mystery that is theirs alone—
Struggles and strains now toward my conquering.
And now as always those quiet withered ones,
Being withered and yellowed now and dried,
Sitting before faint coals, dying on ashen
Hearths in silence, think on that first passion.
Their deep spent eyes still hide that they have known
How well it is for cruel steel to strike
The eternal contour from the volatile stone.

—*Maurice Lesemann*

Portrait in Sinister Lights

Doom walks with her
Born eager for the offerings of all ages
And unmatched with her own;—
With her, amorous of she knows not what,
Blind to the world which rules her.

Only the small souls flourish
On an earth luminous in star-light;
Black-hilled with shoulders supporting the sky,
Holding in its lap the music of running streams.
Here, on an earth sown with the gold seed-lights of cities,
An earth where the mile-wide wheat fields bend under winds
And thunderstorms are lost in mountains—
Here only the small souls flourish!

Millions of them, the small souls:
Sand grains in a dune.
The wind blows
and they creep . . . . . creep . . . . .
A dune moves slowly and trees vanish,
Bright-leafed trees once gay in the sun are lost;
Houses are buried, houses where men loved and children were born
Are eaten . . . . . as a dune moves slowly.

Sand grains in a desert, millions there are.
A hurricane whips and death
For the lonely traveller
Rides fiercely over the desert.
They are hard, these sand grains, hard and little and sharp.
There is a bright sparkle to the mass of them flashing under the sun,
And they cannot be hurt.

In this woman is the folly of yearning
And doom walks beside her
Cloaked in a cold wind and unseen
But seeing.

He will mark her brown with his sign
And she will walk in a sand grain world
To her death.

And no Homer will sing her
(Homer himself, with the other great,
Was marked by doom and begged
In his seven cities)
For she shares but the sadness of outcast souls,
Nought of their mightiness.

Helen was great and a Homer sang her,
Chronicled loveliness born to suffer,
Terrible beauty avenging itself
While Greece, long-desolate,
Waited for sons who never returned;
While burning Troy in the shrill black night
Smouldered like a giant ruby by the sea.

But in this woman (unmatched with her own time
And unaware its menace)
There is nothing great—
Only a fine eagerness: crisp and sweet and fresh
As tendrils of young plants,
Equally helpless against wind-blown sand.
She will come sweet and eager,
And doom will walk with her.

—Royall Snow

When All The World Considers You Are Old

WHEN all the world considers you are old
For that your face takes on the mask of age,
Remember, then, the image of this page
Wherein my young love meagrely was told.
At that time let your palsied voice be bold
Once more with your red-hearted heritage
Of song. O! thus may you unlock, uncage
Your deathless youth before your veins are cold.

They are not few, the poets who have sung
Of that which lives when life is laid away;
But you, dear child of God, shall sing aright
How men and women grow for ever young
When they are disconcerned with time and clay,
Radiant, like stars amid some summer night.

—*Malcolm Vaughan*

Beauty

TO catch some fragment from her hands
That else would fall into the sands
And lie lost and disintegrate:
For this I wait: for this I wait.

Even her casual aspects are
Vivid and lovely as a star;
Aspects that turn, retire and change
Through unimaginable range.

Is she the universe or only
An entity austere and lonely,
Whose moods are moon and colored seas;
Whose thoughts are all the mysteries?

—*Kenneth Slade Alling*

Her House

SHE looks below on paved earth—hears the stir
Such earth was made for, she looks back and faces
These rooms of measured light and spaces
They built and gave to her.
The sunlight stays but briefly on their floors,
And through the windows or the doors
No shade of moving branches falls
In lovely wildness on the walls.

This house was never hers. This house is dust
Strewn upon loveliness. Her house must be
Careless in beauty as a hill or tree,
Lighted and spaced and colored to its trust.

Build her a room that welcomes sky,
Blown petals, swift things going by
That pair their grace with hers; hang curtains there
That love, like butterflies, the air;
Make the walls smooth, but pearled to take
Like flesh all lights that form and break;
Lay pale green floors like still sea over sand,
To match an amber strand
Of hair, or eyes brown-gold.

Build her a place of silences to hold
Her images and questionings.
Make the walls white and give them wings
And curve them to the ceiling. Let the light
Fall golden there by day or blue by night
Through high-arched windows at one end.
Faint on the floor in diamond patterns blend
Marble and moonstone. Let all drapery
Be clear wine-yellow. Set one chair,
Black as a night, star-slender there,
With gleam of agate and of ebony.

And build for her a room that shall display
Symboled, the gladness she has lent—
The quick bewilderment
At brightness in a world gone gray.
Bring pictures there that catch the glow she wears
(As the moon wears the sunlight), sculptured forms
Living with light like hers that warms
And kindles others, thus becoming theirs.

Build her a room for love—roofless to noon,
Stars, and the sword-edged moon;
With bright, wild grass about a pool
That lies on henna-colored stone.
Raise walls of yellow marble overgrown
With purple-blossomed vines, and cool
Their passion with white roses. Lay
Thin paths of sea sand. Bring for music there
The dusk of bay trees fingered by slow air
And bird notes high and brief on the blue day.

Broad lies her house on cloud and purple hill,
Pale-bright, and near, and still,
As waiting for a hand to draw its form
Downward to earth, with earth make warm
The glamor of its pulseless dream. But we
Have built instead these boxes of burnt clay,
Prisons to lock all loveliness away
In gray monotony.

We who are masters now of sea, air, earth,—
We speak our longing and it comes to birth;
Our wheels run smooth to do their work of power;
We change their pathways in an hour.
Yet though we talk with stars, and skim great lands
Like light, and hills are wax beneath our hands
We shall build prisons still for loveliness;
It does not die—we treasure it the less.
We take all beauty as we take the sun . . . .
It will be long before her house is done.

—*Frank Ernest Hill*

The Measure ❧ A Journal of Poetry

Published monthly by the Editors at 449 West 22nd Street, New York

Edited by Joseph Auslander, Padraic Colum, Carolyn Hall, Louise Townsend Nicholl, George O'Neil, Pitts Sanborn, Genevieve Taggard, Winifred Welles. From these eight an acting editor and an assistant are elected quarterly by the board.
Associate Editors—Hervey Allen, Maxwell Anderson and Frank Ernest Hill.

ACTING EDITOR: JOSEPH AUSLANDER

What Then? And Then What?

IT is good, every so often, to draw our loin-cloths tight and wonder about ourselves—and others. It is especially good to wonder about others. And ask (speaking for us to the others), "An't may please Your Worships, we would propound ye a question pithily, thus: Having made this thing which is *The Measure;* and having, this twelvemonth and many a day, put our bone and our blood into the meaning of this thing—what then? And then what?

In the beginning we said: "There are always artists; there is always a flowering of the arts when they are encouraged, when an age appreciates and rewards the makers of beauty. *The Measure, a Journal of Poetry,* has tried and is trying to encourage the poets of this age. Various magazines of verse are trying splendidly to do the same thing, but the whole tendency is weak because of the lack of public and financial support. No magazine, no group, can do much without a gathering of opinion behind it. As matters stand, *The Measure* and its contemporaries are comparatively impotent . . . . . "

And we said: "In order that the editorship shall not be one-sided, the nine poets who founded the magazine shall elect an acting editor quarterly and give him power of life or death over submitted poems . . . . . Yet though *The Measure* will attempt to judge poetry as poetry, it is true that . . . . we are all somewhat tired of Whitmanesque mock heroics and bang-whanging; tired of stereo-

typed rhymes and consolations; tired of seven-day reputations stuffed with bran and hung with cowbells . . . "

We are still formidably tired of such and such, with the result that Don Marquis, writing in the Sun-Dial, said, *"The Measure* seems to direct its efforts chiefly toward finding poets and poetry, choosing from a variety of schools with an admirable catholicity of taste, and not constituting itself the overeager advocate of any special theory of art."

To all of which we dare yet wag our head in a great affirmative motion—*c' est ca!* The staff of *The Measure,* which is composed of men and women who work for a living, has never taken any compensation, and never will. But we believe in paying contributors, paying as much as we can. At the moment we are in the throes of a spiritual inventory. We want to expand in service to poets and to poetry. We do not want to fall upward—or, if you like, downward—in a sort of interminable vacuity. We want to continue our avoidance of the pedestrian and the perfervid in verse, the swivel-chair and the seraglio of revery. We want—.

This is the twentieth number of *The Measure.* How many more and better numbers there shall be rests with you—the others. We need money; we need subscribers and guarantors. *The Measure* must not pass. *The Measure* is not a Fourth-of-July performance, one issue setting off the next through some deliciously inscrutable and benevolent affinity in a succession of brilliant oofs! *The Measure* is organic, articulate, beating; it is not the pressure of a button, the clicking of a switch.

Behold, we have, for a little space, been sitting under a tamarind, contemplating our august navel—and wondering aloud. And you have, for a little space, listened very delicately. And we wonder, what then? And then what?

JOSEPH AUSLANDER.

"The Shimmering Shroud"

Verse, by Adelaide Crapsey. Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

I make my shroud but no one knows,
So shimmering fine it is and fair,
With stitches set in even rows,
I make my shroud but no one knows.

In doorway where the lilac blows,
Humming a little wandering air,
I make my shroud and no one knows,
So shimmering fine it is and fair.

ADELAIDE CRAPSEY has been dead eight years, but the accents of her still, small voice—repeated in this recent edition of her slender book—remain arrestingly and persistently clear. The vitality of those minute notes would be startling enough above the deeper strumming of male instruments, but it is even more amazing to hear them hold their own so lightly at this particular moment in the life of American poetry, when the air is silver-shrill with the carved flutings of a hundred—or more—women poets. In a way she belongs with this vast group of her "sisters," in another she remains quite alone. And it is more than probable that were she still alive, her work continuing, she would yet retain the fair unearthliness which was her distinction, would seem to take her own place quietly apart, a fastidious, perhaps rather satirical, but always gentle little ghost.

Her most widely-known work is in an original form which she called "Cinquain," a design of the utmost delicacy, compactness and grace. In black print on white paper, these deftly-moulded ideas and impressions seem to assume the shapes of tiny, colored vases. "Triad" is one of the many successful.

These be
Three silent things:
The falling snow . . . the hour
Before the dawn . . . the mouth of one
Just dead.

And "Amaze" is a good example of her genius for crystallizing the most strange, most elusive impressions.

I know
Not these my hands
And yet I think there was
A woman like me once had hands
Like these.

But there are many poems in the familiar forms worth remembering too: "Autumn," "Lo, All the Way," "The Fiddling Lad," "Mad Song," and others. And "To the Dead in the Graveyard Underneath My Window" would be a fine poem even without the especial poignancy given to it by realization of its association with the last years of the poet's life. It is heartbreaking to realize that the winged frailty, which was Adelaide Crapsey, should at the last have been caught between the white hills in the desolate little town of Saranac. It is said of her that she met the weariness of those days "with magnificent and appalling courage," but such shuddering verse as "The Lonely Death," "Night Winds," and "Trapped" are significant. And the sharp agony in that defiant challenge to the dead—

"I'll not be patient—I will not lie still!"—

tells only too plainly the despair of her keen spirit at finding itself among those other swathed and muffled figures on some icy porch.

Certainly this is no book for those who cultivate full-throated gaiety exclusively in their reading. I can fancy hearing—indeed have already heard—flat, cheerful voices condemning it as "morbid" and "unhealthy." But for those not fearful of taking either poetry or life too seriously, Adelaide Crapsey's "shroud" will prove more "shimmering fine and fair" than all the flamboyant material in the lustiest of living cap and bells.

WINIFRED WELLES.

Contributors

THOMAS DAWSON, who is twenty-five years old and lives in New York at present, is a native of St. Louis and a graduate of Washington University. In the last few years he has acted, reported, surveyed, clerked; and is now copy-editor on a trade-journal staff.

ALEXANDER JAVIS is another New York poet.

MAURICE LESEMANN, twenty-two years old, has been living for the past two years in New Mexico, among Mexicans and Pueblo Indians, and is now working on poems of the southwest. One of Mr. Lesemann's poems won a prize from *Poetry* in 1920.

ROYALL SNOW, who was editor of *Youth*, the undergraduate poetry magazine, while he was in Harvard, is a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford this year.

Jessica Nelson North, Abbie Huston Evans, Malcolm Vaughan, and Kenneth Slade Alling, have all published here before.

NOTE

With this number Maxwell Anderson and Frank Ernest Hill leave the active editorial board of the magazine to become associate editors; and Robert Hillyer and David Morton leave the board of associate editors. These changes in the original group are made because of too great stress of other work; and they are announced with regret.

The Measure

A Journal of Poetry

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